

# *Land Use*

## **Historical Land Use**

The Missouri, Fox, Osage, and Sac Tribes were some of the early inhabitants of the Wyaconda River basin. It was a favored hunting ground among the tribes. In 1795, a Frenchman named Godfrey LeSeur established a trading post near the mouth of the Wyaconda River, which was abandoned during winter months (SCS 1992). As settlers moved west, a series of treaties claimed the lands for the United States. The first permanent settlement was located just south of La Grange, Missouri in 1819. Settlers from Kentucky and Virginia continued to inhabit lands near the Mississippi River hills and later moved into the interior of the basin (SCS 1992). Farming corn and winter wheat on the highly fertile land provided the economic base for the region. Human populations continued to increase in the basin counties until the early 1900's.

Most of the landcover of the basin was prairie before settlers began farming (Schroeder 1982). The percentage of prairie land ranged from 42 to 51 in Lewis, Clark, and Scotland Counties. The prairies of the basin were located along the narrow uplands or ridge tops and were usually very elongated situated between the parallel flowing streams. The river floodplains were usually very wet prairie, sometimes considered "swampy" (Schroeder 1982). The steeper hillsides shifting from upland prairies to wet prairies were often wooded.

## **Modern Land Use**

Modern land use and cover of the basin was characterized with data from Missouri Resource Assessment Partnership (2003). Croplands cover approximately 114,000 acres (42%) of the basin, while grasslands covered nearly 107,500 acres (40%). Forest lands only accounted for 17% (46,400 acres) of the land cover within the basin. Less than 1% of the land in the basin is considered swamp or marsh (1,200 acres). Of the cultivated crops, soybeans are grown on the most acreage within the three Missouri counties of the basin (Missouri Agricultural Statistics Service 1998). Corn is the second most planted crop. Cattle are the most numerous livestock, followed by hogs (Missouri Agricultural Statistics Service 1998).

## **Soil Conservation Projects**

Under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-83-566), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers two soil conservation projects within the watershed. The Little Wyaconda-Sugar Creek Project was started in 1983 and is now completed. The main purpose of this project was to control erosion. The second project, South Wyaconda River Watershed Project in Iowa, began in 1957 and was completed in 1979. These two projects affect 135,000 acres and 46% of the watershed. A larger PL-566 was proposed for the mainstem Wyaconda River below the confluence of the North and South Wyaconda Rivers in 1987. However, there was little

economic justification for the project and it was terminated in 1991 (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1992). There are currently no EARTH or SALT (Special Area Land Treatment) projects within the watershed.

There are four Missouri Department of Conservation areas within the Wyaconda watershed totaling 509 acres (Table 4). Only two areas, Wyaconda Crossing Conservation Area and Sunnyside School Access provide public access to the Wyaconda River. However, neither of these areas have a concrete boat ramp for boat launching. Wyaconda Crossing Conservation Area and Neeper Conservation Area provide primitive camping sites. There are no public areas in Iowa's portion of the watershed. There are no United States Army Corps of Engineers or United States Fish and Wildlife Service lands within the watershed.

**Table 4. Lands owned by the Missouri Department of Conservation within the Wyaconda watershed.**

Area	County	Acres	Developments
Sunnyside School Access	Lewis	114	None
Wyaconda Crossing Conservation Area	Lewis	148	1 Parking Lot 1 Primitive Camping site
Clark Conservation Area	Clark	20	None
Neeper Conservation Area	Clark	227	2 Parking Lots 3 Primitive Camping Sites

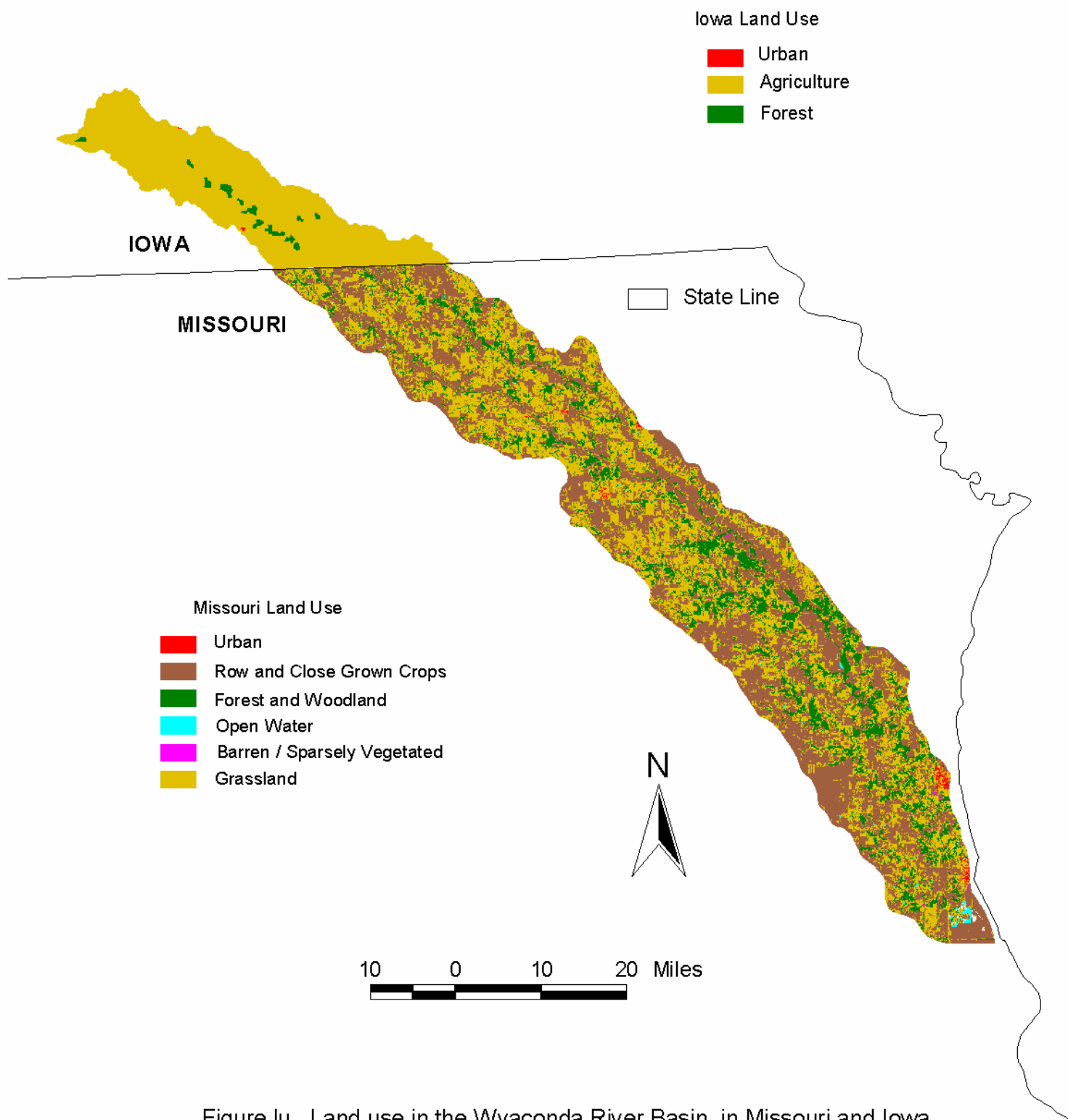


Figure lu. Land use in the Wyaconda River Basin, in Missouri and Iowa.